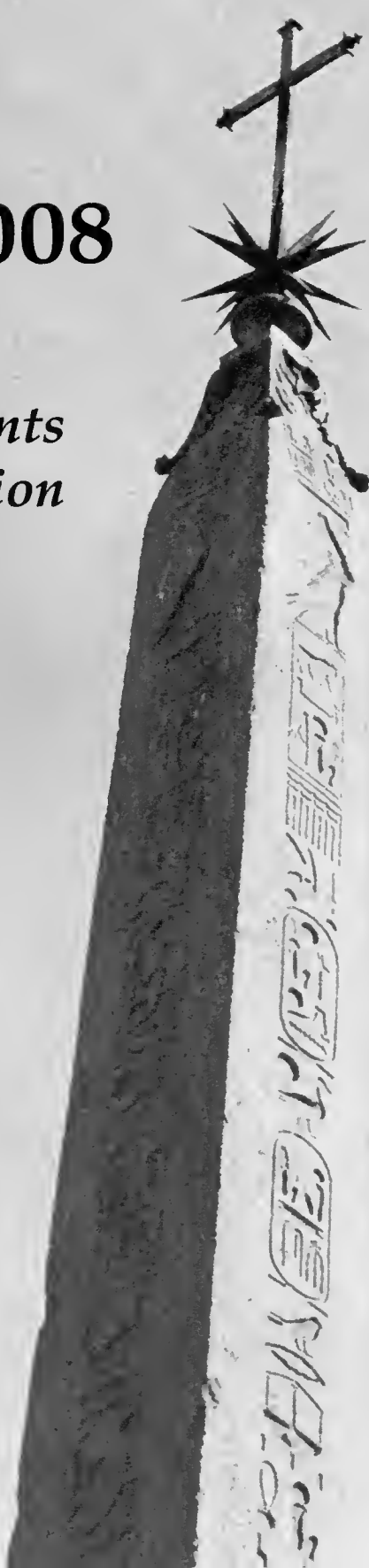


# Carnival 2008

*Journal of the  
International Students  
of History Association*

FACETS OF POWER

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# *Carnival 2008*

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## Letter From the Editor

**V**oilà. You are holding the ISHA Carnival issue of 2008. Planning it started after the 2007 ISHA spring conference in Turku, when I found out that the next issue needed an editor. There were many things I was supposed to do during the next year like the 50 years history of Kritiikki, the association of history students at the University of Turku, not to mention my Master's thesis. Then, during the GA meeting at the end of the conference week someone came to me and asked if I was willing to take on editing Carnival and without thinking I agreed to do it. The 50 years history got published but my thesis is still way from being finished, though Carnival is not to be blamed for that.

For this edition Irene and I decided to combine the issue of Carnival and the spring conference publication of 2008 in hopes of getting more people to submit their writings and funding Carnival partly through the conference. In the end we

received four wonderful articles, three of which dealt with the theme of this Carnival and the spring conference in Delft 2008, the Facets of Power. The articles are organised alphabetically and the writers are responsible for their works respectively. I wish to thank all the writers for their valuable contribution for this issue as well as Irene for assisting me during this process.

The plan I mentioned above didn't quite work out and similar challenges are still there for future editors to tackle. That's why I'm glad there's been an ongoing discussion about the future of Carnival on the ISHA web forum. It's good that all possibilities are examined, since both writers and sponsors are needed also in the years to come. An electronic Carnival has both good and bad sides as well as a printed one. I hope that no matter which form is chosen for the upcoming issues, Carnival will continue to exist and unite ISHA-members all over.

In Turku on the 29th of March 2009  
Minna Uusivirta

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# In What Ways Are Governments of Poor Countries Trying to Overcome Their Problems?

## *A Case Study: Egyptian Development Policies During the Last Years*

**By Arturo Gallia  
Finestre sulla Storia  
Università degli Studi RomaTRE**

**A**t the end of the decolonization process, many developing countries continued to depend economically on the European countries for several years. Afterward, international organizations, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, replaced them, supporting the economies of these countries through investments and development policies of various kinds. In addition to these organizations, regional institutions for economic development, such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and others arose.

These organizations have not always been able to solve the problems of developing

countries and sometimes they have accentuated the economic decline. An example is given by events linked to Egyptian development policies. During the English protectorate the Egyptian government subdued, without having a say, the initiatives of Great Britain. The debt contracted was very high, and the Egyptian government was forced to promote several projects to increase the social and economic situation, in order to redistribute the population and to lighten the population pressure on the Nile Valley.

Policies that were of great importance were those designed to make productive desert territories taken during the Nasser age, which can be divided into two phases<sup>1</sup>. The first period between the '50s and the '60s, during which several actions for reclaim of thousands of feddan have been set out in the province of Tahrir, south west of the city of Alexandria. The reclaimed lands were divided into small lots and given to landless farmers, allowing the final settlement of thousands of families. The second period, starting from the '70s, has opened

a new distribution policy of desert lands, diametrically opposite to that pursued in the first phase. In fact, it consist of getting considerable funds from private investors and subdivided the land no longer in small lots but in large areas, which were sold or given in concession to the same financiers of land reclamation projects.

This policy is still in use, but it is in total contradiction with the idea of encouraging the transfer of thousands of people in these new areas. In fact the management of large companies in these territories involves an influx of workers restricted to the needs of the company established; however, if those great lots were divided into smaller lots, it could assure residence, work and benefits to thousands of families.

Adopting a similar solution, in line with the policies of the '50s and the '60s, would improve significantly the economic conditions of the lowest social classes, but at a cost deemed excessive for the government. Moreover, it is unthinkable that Egyptian government can get into debt further with the Western countries or international organizations such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund. So the solution of private investments seems to be the only feasible for economic growth and the only one that is not excessive for coffers of the state.

The projects carried out by the Egyptian government over the last two decades are, therefore, in line with this outlook, but some of them remain questionable regarding the high costs and the real effects on development. Today, the sites for these interventions are essentially two: the Sinai



## **In the past the Mediterranean side of the Sinai Peninsula was only identified as a buffer zone**

Peninsula and the Southern Desert. These regions are affected by major projects currently under implementation: the *North Sinai Development Project* and the *South Valley Development Project*. They are commonly called *Mega Projects*, because they are projects of large scale economic and industrial planning, and they involve intervention from local governments.

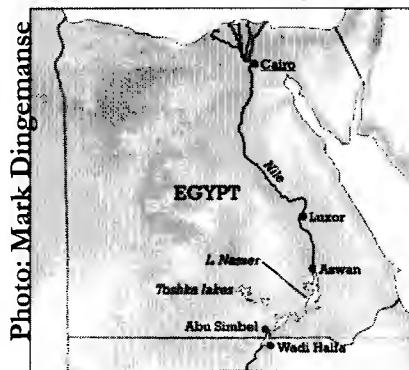
### **NORTH SINAI DEVELOPMENT PROJECT**

In order to reduce the food gap, to lighten the valley of the Nile from the high population density and to decrease unemployment, the Egyptian Government has taken into consideration the potential offered by the Mediterranean side of the Sinai Peninsula. In the past this was only identified as a "buffer zone" with the State of Israel, and it is still strategically important for the presence of hydrocarbon reserves. The fulcrum of development is the expansion of Port Said and the transformation of vast desert areas into places of possible human settlement. Achieving these goals is considered possible by the completion of two small projects: *Sharq Al-Tafri'a Project* and *Al-Salam Project*.

*The Sharq Al-Tafri'a (East Port Said) Project*, started in the mid-'90s, is located on Suez Canal near Port Said. In this area a commercial port and an industrial district will arise, covering a total area of about 220 square kilometers. This Project is supported by the construction of a canal (*Al-Salam Project*) that transports fresh water to irrigate about 1,700 square kilometers of desert lands, between the Mediterranean coast and the slopes of Sinai. The canal will be originated from the delta of the Nile and will be able to withdraw about 4 billion cubic meters of water per year from the branch of Damietta.

## **SOUTH VALLEY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT**

The New Valley governorate has been identified as an ideal place to make cultivated and populated arid lands, in order to increase the capacity of agriculture and to provide an additional reserve of water. Although the region is furthest from the capital and is most torrid throughout the year, its lands are lapped by one of the more important water reserves for the entire African continent: the Lake Nasser. Until today it has been considered by Egypt as a "big tank" of water. Besides being an important negotiation tool in "hydro geopolitical" international issues for the government, it is a way for general improvement of economic and social conditions. The exploitation of its waters in fact may stimulate the improvement of agriculture and promote progress in the industrial and technological sectors. The transformation of the whole region is carried out since 1997 by several local projects, including the development of the area of East Oweinat



*Location of Lake Nasser*

and the depression of Toshka just north of Abu Simbel.

## **EAST OWEINAT PROJECT**

This project on the south western border of Egypt invests about 2,100 square kilometers, about half of which are turned into agricultural lands by means of groundwater recovery. The area has been subdivided into 20 lots, allocated to the companies funding the project, some of which are American, Italian and Saudi. The total cost is estimated more than 400 million dollars.

## **THE TOSHKI PROJECT**

The realization of this project is integrated with the development plans of the New Valley governorate (El-Wādī El-Gādīd). These were launched at the end of '50s by Nasser, with the aim of making the depressions of the Western Desert cultivable and promoting new settlements on the oasis, along this "new valley." To reach the goal it would have been necessary to get water from fossil groundwater through the implementation of several wells. These projects were carried out without a plan.

They would have had a real impact on the local population, since the new lands were divided into small lots (between 42.000 and 200.000 square meters) and distributed between new owners, renters or local authorities. The success of individual projects, however, has not guaranteed the benefits expected in the beginning, but still favored the arrest of emigration from the regions involved.

In the decades that followed, foreign policy issues and the continuous need of water have turned the attention of the government to major projects related to the Nile. In fact, with the completion of the Aswan High Dam all the questions were related to Lake Nasser, its development and the exploitation of its water. In the early '80s, a canal called the *Toshka Spillway* was dug to make more profits from the waters of the "great lake". It was dug on the bed of the Wadi Toshka, an ancient seasonal tributary of the Nile and it would allow irrigating the depressions of the desert.

The abundant rainfall of 1996 forced the government authorities to use this "out-flow" canal. The reflux of water flooded the great depression to the north-west, allowing thus the formation of four lakes. The presence of these lakes has encouraged the cultivation of land surrounding so successfully that the Egyptian government has decided to encourage irrigation of lands between these lakes and the Lake Nasser. The starting point for this project was located to the north, in the Gulf of Toshka, from which it takes its name: *Toshka Project*.

Through the implementation of the Toshka Project, the aim of the Egyptian govern-

ment was to extend the agricultural lands. As the same Egyptian authorities said, it would be possible to make cultivable approximately 14.000 square kilometers of lands in South Egypt only through the use and recovery of the water of Lake Nasser and through the exploitation of fossil groundwater of the Western Desert. In the first phase of the Project, however, the government expects to be able to exploit 2.100 square kilometers, made cultivable using the water of the new canal. On the new lands it will also create big farms and processing industries of raw materials, generating an increase of offers on the domestic and abroad markets.

**At international level Egypt wants to prove to be a country no longer developing, independent from foreign loans**

Around these areas, the government would provide for the creation of new urban settlements and extension of existing ones, building houses for about 5 million people. These initiatives would create a reverse migratory movement from the desert toward the Nile Valley. From a political point of view, the success of this project should ensure an increase in popularity of President Mubarak, as well as the Aswan High Dam allowed Nasser to achieve a great personal prestige. At international level, Egypt wants to prove to be a country



that is no longer developing, is independent from foreign loans and can cover debts contracted in the last century.

On 9 January 1997, the execution of the first phase of the Toshka Project has begun. A canal will bring water from Lake Nasser near the Gulf of Toshka to the lands of New Valley. In this stage, it is expected that the length of the canal will be about 310 kilometers and it will reach the city of Baris in the Kharga Oasis. In the second stage, along the Dakhla Oasis and Farafra, it should reach the Qattara Depression, drawing a new valley where 24 new cities will arise (Rossi, 2004)<sup>2</sup>. The two components of the Toshka Project are the *Mubarak Giant Lifting Station* and the *Sheikh Zayed Canal*.

### **THE MUBARAK GIANT LIFTING STATION**

The Mubarak Giant Lifting Station is the pumping station that will carry water from Lake Nasser to the Canal. It has been projected so that it is possible to draw water through 6 underwater pipelines and 24 pumping turbines: in full swing, the whole structure can draw about 25 million cubic meters of water per day. The estimated costs for the construction of the pumping station are around 300 million dollars.

### **THE SHEIKH ZAYED CANAL**

The Sheikh Zayed Canal originates near the Giant Mubarak Lifting Station from which it receives water. Its construction was divided into several stages. The first stage will cover the distance of 72 kilometers. In order to carry a great amount

of water, the Canal will have enormous dimensions: it will measure 54 meters wide on the surface and its depths will vary between 6 and 9 meters. Then, four smaller branches will cover a total length of 125 kilometers and they will allow a better irrigation of the surrounding lands. The cost of the canal and complementary infrastructure construction is estimated to be more than 300 billion dollars.

### **QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS**

Several pessimistic studies, articles and comments were published about the Toshka Project and other similar projects<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless, the Egyptian government has supported the importance and necessity of creating a new way of settlement to the north of Lake Nasser. Since the '70s, studies and projects aimed to increase the amount of cultivable lands and to reverse the migration flow in order to offset the strong population density on the Nile Valley and on the greater Egyptian towns.

## **\\ The privatization of water would be the most likely future**

World Bank and FAO have set side by side with the government and several Saudi and Western private investors attracted by possible new sources of economic benefits. The little successes obtained with the projects started in the '70s have not demoralized the government, which has become instead a promoter of the "mega-projects" without estimating the real effects and

consequences. Several issues in fact have been raised by those who have studied and analyzed these new development plans in different contexts, such as economical, social, environmental, but especially in the geopolitical context with regard to the delicate international issues.

On the **economic sector**, it has been wondered if it would be appropriate to direct investments toward local projects that are more detailed and able to reach the lower social classes and certainly would have a lower impact on the territory. Investments, however, are mostly of foreign origin and in absence of Egyptian donors the future earnings will benefit only foreign companies.

The success of the projects is likely to have an impact on the **social sphere** as well. Success and wealth could ease international tensions but failure is likely to cause unrest and riots. The aforesaid demographic situation in the Nile Valley, if not resolved, would break the delicate balance between the various Egyptian communities, with a considerable impact on all sectors of the economic and domestic policy.

On the **territorial and environmental issues**, Fouad and Barbara Ibrahim highlighted their disagreement about the goodness of the Project<sup>4</sup>: the soil of the desert on the north of Toshka has the same geological characteristics of other neighboring regions of the Nile Delta; therefore it would be more appropriate trying to make a good use of them. The High Egypt, in fact, is one of the most arid places of the planet. Here the water required for cultivation is twice that required in a region

located on the Mediterranean coast. The risk of salinization of the land is high, as confirmed by irrigation projects in the oasis of Siwa and Dakhla and in Wadi Natrun.

We must not to forget that throughout the Nile course there are continuous tensions between communities, but also among countries for the management of water resources. The role of Egypt in the context of the Nilotic basin is fundamental, so Egypt could get into conflict with the countries of the basin like Eritrea, Uganda and Kenya in the past and Ethiopia and the Sudan today. These countries do not consider the proper exploitation of the waters of the Nile from Egypt, especially if it declares that the Sheikh Zayed Canal will be able one day to convey up to 5 billion cubic meters per year. From where will it be able to collect a similar amount of water?

The Egyptian government goes on to claim that the allocated quota in the agreements of 1959 will never be exceeded, although Ethiopia doesn't recognize them. This is perhaps the most widely addressed issue in the international arena through studies, analysis and commentary written by various sources. Fouad and Barbara Ibrahim themselves<sup>5</sup> posed the same question about the source of water necessary for the project. In Egypt, they state, water supplies are scanty and badly distributed. If the already reduced flow of the Nile is subtracted by a portion of that entity, surely the agriculture could collapse throughout the country. If Egypt will really use such quantities of water, if Sudan fails to comply with the agreements of 1959 and if

Ethiopia provides new hydraulic works on the river course, the current diplomatic relationships could deteriorate.

Although the hypothesis of conflict between the major countries of the basin is considered highly possible, there is also another scenario deemed possible, that is the privatization of water resources. This process of privatization has been promoted in recent years by the World Bank in different regions of the world, regarding that water is a commercial good and such should be subject to the laws of the market. An economic value attributed to its failure and scarcity, but at the same time from its indispensability for survival.

Privatization would allow a more rigorous, careful and rational use of water, limiting waste: this is the vision of many institutional bodies and several multinational companies and this policy has been adopted in many countries. But many experts dispute the privatization of natural resources needed, particularly water, because the effects are not those indicated by the World Bank. In most situations where control and management of water resources has passed into private hands, there have been devastating consequences for consumers, who have seen the water quality and potability dramatically reduced. On the contrary, there has been a rapid growth of prices for water consumption, so much that companies have seen their profits increase by 700%<sup>6</sup>. The Nile basin would be the ideal situation to bring forward the policy of privatization, as multinationals would be able to obtain the lowest possible price for water management in these countries.

An alternative development scenario is linked to the cooperation between the riparian countries. In fact the establishment of an international organization that represents and protects all the states of the basin would be, to according to many<sup>7</sup>, the ideal solution to achieve collective agreements, which are not violated by the institutions involved. A supranational organization monitored by *super partes* institutions could allow coherent, rational and intelligent use of water and could on the other hand reduce wastage, friction and conflicts. The research for new alternatives sources of water and the cooperation between members would ensure an economic balance within the entire basin, and would set guidelines for dissolving the conflicting nodes of this critical region.

The definition of the future of the Nile basin depends particularly on the value that is given to water and natural resources in general. If the guidelines of the World Bank will be pursued, water will be regarded as a commercial good like any other good. The privatization of water, then, would be the most likely future, but certainly very risky from the point of view of social and political stability, not only in Egypt but also in the Nile basin. However, if they listen to the voices that claim the essential and survival value of the water<sup>8</sup> and if governmental policies, interregional distribution, management and retrieval of water resources will be undertaken, the prospect of cooperation between riparian countries would be likely and almost 1/3 of the African continent will benefit from it. Something is moving in this direction, but there is still much to be defined concretely.

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2. Rossi C. (2004), *Idrogeopolitica del bacino del Nilo*, in "Bollettino della Società Geografica Italiana", Serie XII, vol. IX, pp. 71-86.
3. About this and other similar projects, see Doug A. (2002), *Just add water*, in "Geographical", February, London, pp. 18-25; Haggai E. (2002), *The Cross and the River*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., Colorado – London; Ibrahim F. N. – Ibrahim B. (2003), *Egypt. An Economic Geography*, I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, London – New York; Rossi C. (2004), *Idrogeopolitica del bacino del Nilo*, in "Bollettino della Società Geografica Italiana", Serie XII, vol. IX, pp. 71-86 and Waguih A. A. (1998), *L'évaluation d'un projet: le développement du Nord-Sinaï*, in "Revue de Géographie de Lyon", vol. 73, n. 3, pp. 235-238.
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